Forest Cover in the country

3689. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH "SURYA": Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) what percentage of total area in the country at present constitutes forest cover;

(b) what was the percentage of forest cover 25 years and 50 years ago, respectively;

(c) what is the target fixed in this regard;

(d) whether Government would be able to achieve it;

(e) if so, by when; and

(f) if not the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) and (b) Forest Survey of India assess the forest cover of the Country biennially using satellite data since 1981. As per the six assessments made so far, forest tree cover of the country has declined from 19.49% to 19.27% in the period 1981—83 to 1993—95. No assessment of forest cover has been made prior to 1981.

(c) National Forest Policy, 1988 envisages that 33% of the geographical area of the country to be under forest/tree cover.

(d) to (f) A National Forestry Action Programme has been formulated by the Ministry in which a strategy has been made to bring 33% of the country's land area under forest/tree cover in the next twenty years subject to availability of funds.

Conversion of one third land of the country into forests

3690. SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA:
DR. D. MASTHAN:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any scheme has been formulated by the Government to convert 1/3rd land of the country into forest land;

(b) if so, the details of the scheme.

(c) whether any assessment has been made regarding the expenditure to be incurred on implementations of this scheme has been made; and

(d) if so, the details of the amount and the time-limit fixed for converting the land into forest land?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) Yes, Sir. The Ministry of Environment & Forests have formulated National Forestry Action Programme (NFAP), a comprehensive strategic long term plan for the next twenty years to bring one third of the area of the country under tree cover and to arrest-forestation for achieving sustainable development of forests.

(b) The National Forestry Action Programme has live main programmes:

I. Protect Existing Forest Resources: It has three main-sub programmes (i) forest protection, (ii) soil and water conservation, and (iii) protected areas and biodiversity conservation.

II. Improve Forest Productivity: It has four main sub-programmes. (i) rehabilitation of degraded forests, (ii) research and technology development, (iii) development of Non Wood Forest Products and (iv) assisting private initiative with community participation.

III. Reduce Total Demand: It has three main sub programmes for the efficient uses of (i) fuelwood and fodder, (ii) timber, and (iii) Non Wood Forest Products.

IV. Strengthen Policy and Institutional Framework: It has three main sub programmes (i) Central forestry administration, (ii) Central forestry institutions, and (iii) State forestry administration and institutions.

V. Expand Forest Area: It has two main sub-programmes, (i) tree plantation on forest and non-forest land, and (ii) people's participation in plantations and its protection.

(c) and (d) The implementation of NFAP requires huge financial resources and it is estimated that Rs. 1339 billions would be required in the next twenty years to bring one third of the area of the country under tree cover. The programme will be implemented by the States/UTs. The present document aims at sustainable development of 76.5 million ha. of forests covering 16 major forest types extending over 26 States and Union Territories.